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EDITORIAL

EASTER confronts us with a problem that is as old as the race of mankind—the problem of what we shall do in the face of the tremendous reality of death. Three thousand years before the Christian era this was the great problem put to men in the land between the great Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, and so in their ancient epic, *The Gilgamesh Epic,* the hero laments:

> As for mankind, numbered are their days;
> Whatever they achieve is but the wind!

Life was empty of meaning because men could not come to grips with death. The mood of hopelessness is reflected in the advice of Siduri, the ale-wife, to Gilgamesh who went in search of immortality:

> The life thou pursuest thou shalt not find.
> When the gods created mankind,
> Death for mankind they set aside,
> Life in their own hands retaining.

Three millenia later Job was asking the same question: "If a man die shall he live again?"

Some people whose enthusiasm outdistances their insight maintain that in this happy universe survival is inevitable. "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world." The fact is that, contrary to the assertions of an unwarranted faith, this universe is not always a comfortable and friendly place for the human spirit. There are spacious skies and majestic mountain heights in this world —and there are jungles and deserts; there are fruit-trees and thorn-trees, sunsets and tempests, joy and heartache, love and hatred, life and death. Life is made up of the stuff of contradictions: it is beautiful and ugly, there is darkness and light, good and evil. When we look at this vast and lonely universe with steady eyes it is not surprising if life seems to be a vain and empty thing, a comedy of errors, a confusion of noise that in the end signifies nothing! We can understand the doubts of those critics of Christianity who look upon Christian faith as the wishful thinking of those who, lost in the confusion of existence, are whistling in the dark their little tune about God and faith.

And besides the agnostics there are those who are tired of life and, therefore, find little thrill in Easter's great affirmation. Swinburn, you remember, sang for relief at the thought that death was the end. He rejoiced:

> That no man lives forever
> That dead men rise up never.

There is a moving inscription in the ancient cemetary of Lubec in Germany: "When thou callest me, Lord Christ, I will arise, but first let me rest awhile for I am very weary." Granted that this mood of gentle pessimism has its own charm it is, nevertheless, quite helpless before the deep and irrepressible intimations of the heart.

The Easter experience is based on the conviction that life's values are indestructible. Jesus, who stressed courage, bravery, compassion, integrity, died on the cross between two thieves as a common criminal. When men had done their utmost and evil and malice had had its say, death came and did not destroy or take away one thing that made his life great. Jesus was not diminished by death. The old affirmation was there and Paul could fairly sing it: "Death is swallowed up in victory." This is the very heart of the Christian affirmation. This is the Easter gospel.

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Unitarians and the Dialogue*

Ronald M. Mazur

The mediatorship of Jesus Christ is neither uniquely absolute nor absolutely unique, though it is both for those who so experience it.

It is perhaps an understatement to say that the Unitarian perspective is anathema to the confessing Christian rooted in other theological perspectives, for it is a fact that the Unitarian movement has progressively divorced itself from Christian communion by choice as well as by default. Its contemporary negative reputation has much justification.

Thus it may surprise other Christians to learn that within the fellowship of Unitarianism there exists a minority who consider themselves catholic Christians, who deeply love the church universal and who do not have the slightest desire to separate themselves from the mainstream of Christianity. Indeed, there are some who could conscientiously subscribe to the constitution and by-laws of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. I belong to this minority. Emphasizing that I am solely responsible for the following statements of opinion, I should like to note some contributions Unitarian Christianity might make to the ecumenical dialogue currently in process between Protestants and Protestants, Protestants and Catholics, Christians and adherents of other world religions.

Four Types of Christology

The most distinctive element in historical unitarianism has been its radical Christology. In terms of the contemporary theological situation, four types of christological perspective are to be distinguished, and of these, three may be labeled unitarian.

The first of these types may be termed "Jesus Christ," considering the two words as one. It designates the type of belief of those who hold that Jesus was God incarnate. This belief is held without qualification; there are few who bother themselves with the subtleties of the doctrine of the hypostatic union. Pietistically docetic, this christological doctrine is the modern attitudinal residue of the dogmatic formulations of the first seven ecumenical councils. That Jesus Christ is both true man and true God is a concept which cannot seem reasonable to the modern mind; the Christology of "Jesus Christ" is either accepted as an unquestionable and infallible dogma divinely revealed (a "mystery") or it is so accommodated on one or the other of the historically heretical positions that it can at least be lived with.

A second type of christological expression can be labeled "Jesus as the Christ." It sees the function of the Christ mode as distinguishable from the person of Jesus. This position, which can be held in a Unitarian perspective, is represented in the views of two of the earliest Christian theologians, St. Paul and the writer of the Gospel According to John. When Paul refers to the Christ as being equal with God, and when John speaks of the *logos* as being God, they are not speaking of Jesus. Rather, their concepts of the pre-existent Messiah (Paul) and the pre-existent *logos* (John) refer to qualitative, relational dimensions of the godhead – his living, creative spirit and his redeeming love – which they have experienced as revelations through witness to the meanings and values for which the suffering servant Jesus gave his life.

This distinction is crucial: New Testament Christianity is trinitarian (or binitarian) with respect to the nature of the godhead; that is, it conceives of God in the manifestations of the Father, the Christ and/or the Holy Spirit. But it is also unitarian in reference to the significance of Jesus: Jesus was not God, but in his life and work and death he manifested God to men. New Testament theology understands Jesus not in terms of "Jesus Christ" but rather in the framework of "Jesus as the Christ."

The interpretation "Jesus as the Christ" tends, however, to view history in an absolute, one-dimensional fashion; the definite article freezes the particularity and uniqueness of Jesus as *the*

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Christ. How are we to account for the great men in other times and cultures who through their lives also manifested dimensions of the godhead to their peoples and ultimately to the world? The process of the self-revelation of God through men in history began before the time of Jesus; it occurred and occurs in all culture-epochs. It is not the particularity of the revelation of God through Jesus which is the scandal, but the dogmatism of men in the face of a pluralism of particular revelation-constellations or Christ-events.

It is in the face of the necessary admission that disciples of Socrates, Gotama, Confucius, Mohammed and others could have experienced personal wholeness (salvation) that the christological expression can be phrased as "Jesus as a Christ." Jesus is but one of the Christs of history, and his mediatorship is therefore not uniquely absolute or absolutely unique — even though it is both absolute and unique for those of us who experience it as such.

It should be apparent, however, that "Jesus as a Christ" does not resolve the christological problem. It leaves us with a vague kind of universalism, the relativism of which paralyzes religious commitment and spiritual development; religion and theology are reduced to the lowest common denominator (ethics) for the sake of operating cooperatively on a social level. This view that ethics is religion attempts to eradicate the distinctions of particularity, and so castrates the revelation-bearing mythic symbols. The virtue of the "Jesus as a Christ" position is that it provides a temporary stopping place in religious development from which one can deepen his insights into God's many dimensions and enrich his love and respect for all the peoples of the world.

On this level of understanding, one has momentarily objectified his own religious commitment, suspended it for analytic judgment and correction, and benefited immensely from the study of other Christs and world religions. But then comes that moment in one's personal life when he must relinquish the role of passive observer of rituals to take that existential step into his own life of worship. In a flickering glimpse into the abyss of his own being, he suddenly senses the potential meaninglessness of his own life in spite of all his rational knowlege of the world's religions, and he actualizes his own self to the extent that he allows himself to be grasped by the existential myth structure of his religious heritage.

The mere knowledge that each major faith has its own Christ symbol-pattern is no substitute for the experience of participation in the Christ of one's own tradition. Indeed, rather than leading one into a hopeless relativism or a superficially forced universalist syncretism, the recognition of pluralism in particularity should just as easily point to the obvious: that worship through particularity is inevitable and necessary. It is then that, through the concrete act of worship and commitment, "Jesus as a Christ" becomes "Jesus as My Christ."

Meaningful Myths

Jesus as My (Our) Christ is the mythic expression which provides the concrete framework for my faith. I cannot articulate in analytic terms the full depth and existential quality of my relationship with the godhead, but I can share this qualitative dimension of experience by directing you to the Christ Jesus. Insofar as Jesus becomes your Christ also, we can communicate on a profounder level of understanding, and I can share with you this meaning-in-relationship through that community called the church.

It would require volumes of theological dialectic to express, however inadequately, my faith that God manifests the qualities of his being through the lives of his created sons. But the symbol of the incarnation can facilitate our dialogue. How could I convince anyone through logic alone that the healing power of redemptive love is available to men in history if I did not have the cross to point to? And how abstract would be my conviction that the full self is more than the biological body if I had not the myth of the resurrection whose existential import we both may share!

Perhaps I too would settle for personal salvation through any of the world's religions, but the myth of the Kingdom of God tells me that salvation is not only personal but historical and communal as well. Such are the many examples of faith content which are immediately carried to me through the truth-pointing mythic symbols of my religious heritage, as soon as I experience Jesus as my Christ.

Scandal-less Particularity

As far as the interfaith dialogue is concerned,

we have just reached the pinnacle of the central problem: How do we as Christians maintain the integrity and existential relevance of our Christ-event while neither forsaking its universal application nor belittling the sacredness of the other faiths of the world? It is at this point that I believe Unitarian Christianity has a vital contribution to make to the life of catholic Christianity, for in it particularity is no longer seen as a scandal. Nor must particularity, in the view of Unitarian Christianity, be affirmed at the sacrifice of the possibility of universal application. Historically and culturally every religion is particular while drawing its mythic structure, through which truth is mediated to its disciples, from a mainstream of archetypal images.

So far we have encountered a basic epistemological problem which has traditionally been misunderstood as a particularist-universalist dilemma. In religious terminology this is known as the problem of conversion experience. In other words, we are faced with a mystical dimension of experience which until existentially incorporated leaves an epistemological gap between the "Jesus as a Christ" and the "Jesus as My Christ" experiences. This conversion problem is not peculiar to Christianity. Qualitatively, the problem is the same in the conversion of a nominal Christian into a witnessing Christian, in the conversion of a Jew into a Christian, or in the conversion of a nominal Jew into a witnessing Jew.

St. Paul articulated his experience in terms of justification by faith, and this concept remains as the clearest expression of the Christian understanding of the conversion phenomenon. Every religion which is concerned with the fullness of being of the whole person must grapple with this experience in its own structural framework and terminology. The important point is that it is useless and foolish to harangue others who have a different Christ or who have not yet committed themselves to any Christ. There is simply no possibility for communication because there is no common basis of experience. Paul had insight into this truth, for it was his procedure not to debate with the Greeks and Romans but simply to witness to the dimensions of life as he had experienced them. He knew that the response to his presentation of the "good news" was something over which he had no control; he trusted in the providence of God to lead to the experience those who were ready to hear.

Deepening the Dialogue

In presuming that we who know our Christ must be the vehicles through which Christ will be known and in assuming that our Christ is the only Christ, we set up ourselves as a self-idolizing "chosen people." This is not to imply that creedal irrationality is justifiable, nor does it mean that Christian apologetics is useless, but it does suggest that we must temper our defense of our theological positions with "gentleness and reverence." The sixth rule for ecumenical dialogue as set forth by Robert McAfee Brown in the February 17, 1960, Christian Century must always be lived: "Each partner must recognize that all that can be done with the dialogue is to offer it up to God." This is why it is sheer arrogance for those who move on one or the other of the four christological "levels" to stir up hostility and bitterness toward each other in the attempt to impose conversion. Religious dialogue does not mean argument for the purposes of persuasion; rather, it involves honest exposure of the self to the other in trust that the common intensity of ultimate concern is a shared experience upon which can be built a foundation of mutual understanding and respect.

Past theological doctrine has hardened the Christian sensibility to the worth and sacredness of other persons, and it has surrounded Christianity with a forbidding exclusiveness. It is at this point that some of my Unitarian colleagues refuse to participate in the theological enterprise, thereby cutting themselves out of any possible contribution to the ecumenical dialogue. But if anything can save theology from itself it is only a more dynamic theology.

I am concerned that contemporary Unitarian Christians are being misunderstood and unduly held in suspicion by their Christian brethren of other denominational affiliations, though I do not doubt that we are fully to blame for this situation. The term Unitarian Christian designates a theological movement of similar-minded persons who nominally belong to Unitarian or Universalist churches. Some of its adherents are affiliated with an independent organization called the Unitarian Christian Fellowship. The new consolidated "denomination," to be called the Unitarian Universalist Association, is actually not a denomination as such, for it is not

theologically homogeneous. Roughly labeled, there are three major theological constellations within the association: nontheistic humanists, universal religionists and unitarian Christians. No one of these groups speaks for the association as a whole, and no one of them can formulate a definitive theology for the association. On a small scale, this is organic ecumenicity in action – perhaps the genius of our associational character.

Naturally, all of these distinctions–they are far from clear-cut–are difficult for the person outside the movement to understand. But the distinctions do exist. Each group, so far as it formally exists, must speak for itself. It is for this reason that I have been speaking of Unitarian Christianity in relation to the ecumenical movement rather than of Unitarians or Unitarian Universalists in general. And even then, I speak as one Unitarian Christian.

So far as the relationship of Unitarian Christianity to the ecumenical dialogue is concerned, the significant point is that our name is of minor importance compared to our concern for the revitalization of catholic Christianity in modern times. The Christian church must find a way to put its denominational differences in proper perspective so they will not hinder its primary mission: providing direction, meaning in life and ultimate values for its millions of adherents. Spiritual oneness through the inspiration of our common Christ should be our primary allegiance. At present, the masses of nominal Christians have no meaningful commitment because they sense the hypocrisy of our claims to exclusive salvation. Reason is opposed to faith–and what is needed is a reasonable faith.

To Make 'Christians' Christian

It will not frighten those masses to know that we are not in possession of infallible dogma. It is precisely that claim which seems to violate integrity and which creates so much anxiety for the doctrinal security of the faith at the expense of true communion with others who believe differently. With integrity will come security, and with security the removal of those intellectual stumbling blocks which prevent the acceptance of Jesus as Christ. When the question is changed from "Jesus Christ or hell?" to "Jesus as Christ or who as Christ?" we will be able to trust in the mediating symbols of our Christian church and of our tradition to reveal the fullness of religious insight to the nominal Christian.

Conversion, then, must be primarily aimed at nominal or cultural Christians rather than against the so-called non-Christian. Insofar as the conversion experience can be nurtured by normative spiritual training within the Christian communion, it should be our mission to make "Christians" Christian. Certainly Protestantism has barely mined the richness of the liturgy and the sacraments for this purpose.

I am suggesting that Christian missions to other faiths for the sake of conversion be abandoned. The ideal type of Christian activity on the soil of other faiths is altruistic service, religiously motivated, without the expectations of conversion. This is where the special characteristics of the Christian faith play a dominant role in our encounter with other faiths. We believe in a personal God whose sons we are; we believe that salvation is historical and communal as well as personal; we believe that the integrity of each human being has worth in the sight of God. If we really do believe that we are brothers engaged in the work of our Father's Kingdom, the important thing is that we so behave. Instead, we tend to spend so much time trying to convince others that we are their brother Unitarians, or their brother Protestants, or their brother Christians that we constantly hinder the possibility of becoming brothers under the sonship of one God.

There is some truth in all religions as well as some distortion of truth in all religions. If we as Christians openly participate in the interfaith dialogue, trusting in God's providence to bring to fruition the partial good works of men, we will feel secure in whatever truth we do have, while accepting without anxiety the varied insights which other religions have to contribute to us.

Truth is one. There is no such thing as Christian truth or Jewish truth or Buddhist truth. While we can know religious truth only as a Christian or a Jew or a Buddhist, can know it only as it is mediated to us from our tradition in mythic form, we can so *act* in this life according to what we do know that the corresponding insights in the other religions will be encouraged to develop on their own and within their own relevant cultural context. Truth partially realized in any one religious form acts as a stimulant to the unfolding of that truth in other

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Maundy Thursday

ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR A UNITARIAN

By F. W. Barr

(Reprinted from *The Inquirer*, April 9, 1960)

Although Maundy Thursday is still marked on our calendars and in our diaries and observed by the Sovereign at a very lovely ceremony held in Westminster Abbey, it has but little meaning for most people today, and certainly for those outside the Roman and the Anglican Churches, including the Unitarians. And this is a pity, because whether one is an adherent of orthodox or of liberal Christianity, to ignore or overlook the day before Good Friday (and Good Friday itself), is to miss much of the inner, spiritual meaning of Easter.

In an attempt, therefore, to help my people to realise its significance and its place in pre-Easter devotions, I, like other Unitarian ministers in various parts of the country, hold a Communion Service on this particular Thursday, in the hope that through it, those present will be reminded that all they need to know about the religion of Jesus can be found in his words and actions as reported and described in the traditional account of the Last Supper, which every Maundy Thursday commemorates.

This becomes clear when it is explained that the word Maundy is derived from the Latin word Mandatum, meaning a charge or commission. And obviously the charge or commission with which the communicants are concerned is that given by Jesus to his disciples, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you." (John 13, 34.)

To me, the gathering of the Twelve in that upper room on the evening prior to the crucifixion, symbolises the Church throughout the ages. Various characters, temperaments and backgrounds were represented, and various human weaknesses too, yet all had been drawn into fellowship with one another and with Jesus, by the impact made upon them by his fascinating and powerful personality. The desire to be his was present in each life, however much they differed in other respects, yet like so many of his admirers and would-be followers in later years, they seemed unable to grasp the most important aspect of his teachings. No doubt they were confused by much of what he said, owing to their Jewish upbringing and roots, and then, so far as some of them were concerned, materialistic and self-righteous ideas had developed through a too literal interpretation of what he had meant them to understand in a purely spiritual sense.

Knowing that time was running out and that soon he would no longer be with them, it was as if he made a last dramatic attempt to show them exactly what was necessary if they were to be true to him and his teachings.

Making use of the traditional Passover rites, and having duly acknowledged God, he broke and shared the bread among them, and the cup also, and then he washed their feet, summing up as it were, his words and actions, in his "New Commandment," his Mandatum. And knowing how fervently they desired to be worthy of him, he ended his charge with the words, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another!" In other words he stressed the need for all who wish to be associated with him to cultivate loving dispositions, devoid of pride, jealously, prejudice and intolerance, and to lose themselves in sacrificial service.

So as we gather together to call to mind this solemn and moving occasion, and as we recall the words of the Master, we are reminded that despite all "orthodox" criticism and all the "official" creeds and dogmas, our little fellowship of churches is indeed right in its claim that religion must find expression in love to God and love to Man, and that our contention to be in the mainstream of the Christian tradition is a perfectly valid one.

Recognising how far short we fall of the standards of Jesus, we pray that the Spirit that was in him, may be in us also.

We spend a great deal of time, and rightly so, in committee, working out ways and means to keep our church open, and much energy is expended in running socials and sales of work and so on, but if we do not allow ourselves sufficient time to bring ourselves more perfectly into union with God in the Spirit of Jesus, our efforts are wasted.

Consequently, to me, Maundy Thursday provides one of those precious opportunities for deepening the life of the spirit, and for rededicating ourselves to the things for which our religion stands.

The Four Types of Faith

Ernest Werner

Is it after all a weaker position to believe in God than to disbelieve? Such is a current popular feeling. The disbeliever hasn't a superstructure of theology to keep on defending or patching up. He seems to be in the stronger position by appealing to experience and evidence directly at hand.

Clearly, we cannot defend all the *ideas* of God which either our traditions give us or our philosophers attain. Many of these are contradictory; there is a continuous theological debate. On the whole this weakens the claims of theology and ought to serve to remind us of the imaginative and hypothetical ingredients theology draws on, and must, to deal at all with a subject matter that is elusive, invisible, and always rising toward transcendence. The first theological fact is that we have no perfectly adequate idea of God, and the first theological statement might well be a confession of ignorance. It is not that we know nothing but that everything we do know is problematic, complex, ambiguous. Everything fruitful happens after we recognize this.

What I want to show here is only that faith exists in at least four types, which so far as one can tell cover the stances men adopt toward ultimate issues, e.g. life, death, destiny, God. The types are pure and rather abstract as we discuss them, and for the time being all the sub-variations which may occur do not interest us. What *is* interesting in the light of our initial question is that atheism, agnosticism, and humanism are no less types of faith than faith in its conventional meaning as faith in God.

We define faith as *the leap into stability with reference to the ultimate issues of life.* The "leap" of faith (Kierkegaard's word) is a sensitive description of something characteristic in each type of faith. You jump to some enduring affirmation before all the evidence is in. It never will be in—all of it. You think as long as you can, reflect on experience, talk, read, listen—and still you have to make the leap into some ultimate stability, some steadfast affirmation which will hold up against contrary evidence and experience.

I know it is shocking to talk this way. It is the very reason why the non-believer objects to "faith." Why make the leap? Isn't it the end of openmindedness? And how in the world can you speak of contrary evidence and experience and then pretend that your faith is truthful?

The point is that the four types of faith, namely, theism, atheism, agnosticism, and humanism all show these characteristics unmistakably. Each represents a leap to some ultimate stance before all the evidence is in (evidence, *all* of which is *never* coming in). The necessity of it belongs to the structure of human existence with respect to any of its ultimacies, where every human stance remains problematic no less than faith in the ordinary sense. To say that faith seeks a stabilizing ground where it is capable of withstanding contrary evidence and experience is to make a statement applicable to the atheist, the agnostic, or the humanist no less than the theist.

The first theistic type of faith is theism, faith in God. (Theos is "god" in Greek). Either a Being or some Quality of being is looked on as the high source of all our human truth and good. The source cannot be damaged, cannot exhaust itself. God lives and creates unceasingly.

Ideas about God are very various and often poor. A reptile, a fish, a bull, a manshape, a monster may all be gods in the phase of idolatry that creates images in wood and stone. Idolatry today has retreated to the imagination; the images are interior but surprisingly often there, contrary to the Second Commandment which is a program for a thoroughgoing iconoclasm in the name of the spirituality of God.

Faith Is Always Problematic

Faith in God is therefore not necessarily good and it immediately precipitates the question, What kind of God? Infinitely powerful and good? Powerful but not infinitely good? Good but limited? A person, a subperson, a superperson, an entity beyond personality, a force, a thing, no-thing? I am not arguing for any conception where the "leap" of faith is not required. Before all the evidence is in or can be, one leaps. Included in the leap is a determination to withstand contrary experiences and evidence

by the force of deeper experience and confirming evidence. Thus, to describe God as the source of all your good, as your Heavenly Father, as one who loves you, as one whose Son raised Lazarus from the dead, and to have your child run over by a truck and killed before your eyes is to be faced with a contrary evidence. Faith never ceases to be problematic, cannot be wholly free from doubt. What it means is not intellectual certitude but firmness in a stance toward the ultimate issues which we cannot be forever rethinking! Firmness in faith means withstanding lesser elements of experience which stream in another direction and tend to undermine your stance.

The affirmation of God is therefore a very broad thing in itself, but I do not know that it ever reaches a lower mood than resignation, as in the pessimistic Ecclesiastes. Koheleth does not despair; he is stoical. The affirmation of God may sometimes reverse itself into atheism with violently passionate negations and attacks. As a rule faith in God looks naively for goods at hand as direct evidences or more profoundly locates its good, its hope, its consolation *in* God *as* God, regardless of any present plight. Whether I live or die is no matter; God is. So faith in the usual sense of theism often accompanies a mood of hopefulness; life *is* good, despite its evils; life does matter, despite its insignificance; life is meaningful, despite its whirlpools of senseless vacuity.

The reason why people are often shocked by atheists seems to me to lie here. Atheism often, though not necessarily, is sheerly nihilistic. Life is not good, does not matter, has no meaning. It is not always people's ideas of God which atheism offends but their feeling for life in its hopefulness, its potential for renewal, its mysterious significance.

Atheism a Type of Theism

Atheism is the second type of theistic faith. Since atheism is a popular scareword, there is something to be said for the vaguer term, nontheism, to get rid of these emotional disadvantages. Yet atheism is a precise term because it implies the negation of existing theistic conceptions, and though it is unthinkable that you can deny a man's idea of God without provoking passionate opposition, so far as possible the term should be used neutrally in theological discussion.

Before all the evidence is in, before the atheist has thought all the thoughts or read all the books, before he has seen how things turn out, before he has had every experience and reflected on it, he leaps. The human being seems to find indecision intolerable when it is accompanied by concern. If there is no concern, no religious passion, and only a superficial indifference, indecision is fine and rather convenient. But the atheist is a man religiously concerned, often deeply aggravated and unable to forsake the subject of religion. He sees the pretense, the wishing, the dishonesty, the illusion in so much theistic believing, especially in its mediocre strata. He sees what Freud, and before him, Feuerbach saw in degraded religion and so he denies it. His denial is steadfast; he gains a stability with reference to such ultimate issues as life, death, destiny, God. Each wind of doctrine does not blow him off course, dash him now on these rocks, now on others. Contrary experience and evidence flows to him in a steady stream; he withstands it. Transcendence, wonder, mystery, the sense of significance, conscience, inexplicable renewal, the remorselessness of justice—things of that sort he regards not as the Voice of God but merely as the character of a dumb and speechless reality. The question is, can he prove his position, prove his negation? No. For the atheist no less than the theist, the problematics remain. They are part of the structure of human experience with reference to the ultimates which, however, we seem to need to take a stand on. Atheism is a form of integration. It orients one with reference to basic values. It seems healthier than disorientation or demoralized drifting, and as a criticism of inadequacies in current beliefs it may be motivated by the highest veracity.

Since Socrates seemed an atheist to some of his contemporaries because his conception of God was finer than theirs, and since the early Christians were called atheists because they had turned their backs on the naively primitive deities, we may well hesitate before judging atheism. One man's God is another man's idol. It is doubtful if atheism does not depend on theism for its very existence, while theism may need atheism for purification and development. Ontologically, a total vacuum of theistic belief would lead *first* to theism; and the insufficient idea, the limited understanding of the theist is then attacked and refuted by the atheist. But

we are not assessing the value of atheism at length. We are seeing it only as a type of faith, involving some leap to finality of judgment before such finality can be evolved in the progressing of knowledge, thinking, experience, feeling, or whatever. The various paths lead only to a question mark, the paradox of existence viewed religiously. Beyond that one leaps into theism or atheism or agnosticism.

Agnosticism Is Driven to Make the Leap

This third alternative may not, at first, seem to be a "leap" of faith. Is it not rather a refusal to leap? Agnosticism begins by saying, "I do not know." This seems tentative, openminded, perhaps the most scientific stance one can adopt; and if it is only this, it does not belong among our types of faith.

However, to stop here is to overlook the immense pressures within the human person which impel him toward one of the four faiths: the pain of diffusion, of lack of personal integration, of instability with reference to the ultimate issues, the urge to clarify oneself with respect to them wherever there is concern. Agnosticism succumbs to these pressures, however tentatively it begins. It is driven to make the leap. From "we do not know," agnosticism, assailed by both theism and atheism, hardens into "we *cannot* know." Here stabilization is achieved in radical ignorance, which is the third type of theistic faith. The condition of not knowing is to the agnostic stronger than the alternatives in faith. It is capable of withstanding contrary evidence and experience, particularly because so many theists overlook the high degree to which they draw upon imagination in trying to cast their intuitive and transcendent experiences into forms the mind can handle. Our great contemporary interest in religious symbolism as the form of theological thought shows that advanced religious thinkers understand this, but you do not find this sophistication in many Protestant parishes.

Man Is Too Evil

The fourth type of faith is not theistic but humanistic. It shows clearly the characteristics of faith: the leap before all the evidence is in, the stability with respect to ultimate issues, the capacity to withstand contrary evidence and experience.

Humanistic faith makes man in some sense the object of faith. The words "in some sense" seem particularly important. No humanist could dare to make a god of man in any unqualified sense: man is too evil pragmatically, despite his good. The forces that contend for his soul are those traditionally described as Satan and God. Mythology aside, there is a deep psychological rightness in this old belief, showing that a choice must be made within man himself.

Apparently, humanistic faith is willing to dispense with theistic preoccupations. It dares to locate what is hopeful, what is indestructibly fresh and renewing, somehow within man as the only being in whom these triumphs have been indisputably manifest. Yet humanism remains open with respect to theistic alternatives; it may be theistic, atheistic, or agnostic so far as it concerns itself with theism at all.

It is simply outside the scope of this brief essay to try to show that one of these types of faith is superior to the others. The point is not that. It is rather that faith, conceived as the leap into stability with respect to ultimate issues, occurs in these four types. The structures of each are at least similar. None is beyond doubt. Each requires the leap before the infinite evidence is gathered in, and each is exposed to currents of temptation as qualities of experience and varieties of evidence assail it. The inspiration behind these thoughts is my conviction that men must find some stability toward the ultimate issues but that no stance is free from the problematics of faith. If this is correct and acceptable, it should help us to do something toward dispelling the erroneous view that belief in God is weaker than its alternatives. No sooner do we take this subject out of its fundamentalist-modern deadlock (long since obsolete) than we see that the issue is not so simple as any too-easy skepticism supposes.

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religious forms. Hence the particularity of religious faiths which gives those faiths their content is not necessarily in conflict with the universality of truth which is potential in all of them.

Perhaps in some future eon the faiths of the world will be so true to themselves that they will touch each other in the innermost core of their universality, in which case each particular historic Christ-form will have been fully realized. So long as this vision lives, the dialogue will be sustained and continued in depth.

Query to the Humanists

Charles De Vries

My conviction is that naturalistic humanism is basically materialistic, and as such, it must be impersonal in its expression of religious faith, and ceremonies. According to this view, man stands in relationship to a world of objective material reality, and his unique nature as a human being is identified with, and is only a more highly developed expression of, the stream of life which is in all other living creatures. The material world and universe is the enduring and ultimate reality.

Therefore man's relationship with this world and reality in this deeper sense must be put in impersonal terms. He speaks of life as force, or energy, or power, and of his own relationship to a material universe. He may speak of nature or the universe as God, but there is no encounter, no communion as person to person. So he cannot pray in the traditional sense of prayer; he aspires, he meditates, or expresses the aims of the human relationships for which he strives. And there are thousands of sincere persons who so live and serve.

On the other hand, theism, as I understand it, is basically spiritual, and personal in its relation to God, or Ultimate Reality. That is, man stands in relationship to a physical, material world—for all of us live in the same world—but by faith, and out of the nature of our own being as persons, we hold that the real world is non-material, is spiritual, and that the Ground of our Being as such is Spirit, or God. The real, and ultimate Reality is Spirit. As expressed in the simple words of the Gospel of John, "God is Spirit," and we worship Him, we pray to Him, we are related to Him, as Spirit. This relationship we express in personal terms, such as Supreme Being, Eternal Father, Friend, and Redeemer.

These statements may be oversimplified, but they do state a real difference between naturalistic humanism, and personalistic theism, and indicate a real difference between the two which should not be ignored, and passed by as of no account.

These are two different approaches to reality, two different premises upon which we start, and from which follow different conclusions. After many years of friendly conversation with humanists, I have felt this basic difference of point of view, and thus the impossibility of putting religious faith and experience in the same language.

The honest humanist with his basically materialistic philosophy must be confined in his words as to the Ultimate Reality. He cannot honestly pray to God as Spirit, when there is no Spirit to pray to; when there is no faith in, or encounter with God as Supreme Will, and Intelligence, and Love, and Truth. Therefore, no prayer, no worship, no fellowship with God in this personal sense.

Is this view which I hold correct, or real, or just imagined on my part? This is my query to the honest humanist.

If the above is true, why not frankly admit it, and face up to it? Why cover it up, or hide behind the forms of the traditional ceremonies in our churches? Why pretend to worship, when there is no one higher than man to worship? Or, frankly say that we are worshipping man.

Why not have the courage and the candour to frankly admit that God and immortality in this personal sense are illusions, as Corliss Lamont does. Or, be forthright in our statements of religious humanism as Curtis Reese has always been, or as Kenneth Patton in his mystical, naturalistic humanism is. We know where these men stand, for they plainly tell us. They make no reservations about it, and are willing to face the consequences of their faith, as it leads to a cold, philosophic impersonalism.

Many, even of our devoted leaders, will say that this does not, and cannot make any real difference in our creedless church, where we have no test of religious faith, even for our ministers. So let us just play, and work along together for the advancement for what is called a "liberal religion." We can be indifferent to this difference; for this is the basis of our unity. There is no issue now; the humanist-theist controversy is settled, or so we are told. All men of good will are welcomed into the fold of an all-inclusive liberalism.

This is implied in our statement of union with the Universalists. We are both children of the Judeo-Christian tradition; both have our roots in the personal faith of the Scriptures. Now, we have grown up, and out of our traditional faith

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From the President's Desk

Paul H. Chapman

As I contemplate the approaching consolidation of the two liberal churches into the Unitarian Universalist Church and the selection of a President for our new venture, my mind travels back to a service of ordination in the First Parish of Lexington which I was at the time serving as minister. One of the young men of the parish, having come to the time of his dedication to the ministry was kneeling for the Prayer of Ordination and the other young minister who asked God's blessing upon him recalled the island where both had received their greatest inspiration. Both of them began at once to take an important part in our two denominations. The one to become the Dean of a Universalist Theological School and the other the President of the A.U.A.

From the beginning of his career as a Unitarian leader, Dana Greeley has been a staunch advocate of closer relations between Unitarians and Universalists. Thirty years ago when it was proposed that our two denominations be brought together in one organization, to be known as the Free Church of America he was one of the most enthusiastic workers for a united church. As the leader of our Unitarian youth he almost succeeded in bringing our two youth groups together. In the first voting the proposal passed. Then, for reasons difficult to understand, the proposition was reconsidered and lost by a small margin in a second vote.

Undaunted by this, Dana Greeley continued to work for closer cooperation between our two churches. He was one of those who favored making 16 Beacon Street available to the Universalists when their lease on their old headquarters ran out. He served on committees to do away with duplication in our publishing and in our field trips to churches and church schools. In every instance he has supported every effort which might mean closer ties of fellowship and more effective joint-endeavors. He has demonstrated his understanding, his enthusiastic leadership, and is qualified in an unusual way to lead our two denominations into the new era of consolidation. Is it wise to change leaders just as we are about to bridge a gap between us?

For Dana McLean Greeley to see the consolidation of our two liberal churches means the realization of a dream held throughout his professional life. For him to serve as President would be for all of us an opportunity to work with a most inspired leader.

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which was for another era. Now, we are free to roam, and welcome members of all religions, or no religion; now we welcome all men of whatever background of faith, to the "free and universal fellowship of all mankind." We were both founded in a spiritual, or personalistic faith. However, we have now outgrown it, and the main interest now is fellowship, even without a faith in God, as commonly understood.

My question is this: does our unity mean the ignoring of this personal faith in God as the Universal Father, and a blending into a syncretistic liberalism, with a main emphasis on the dignity of man, without a declared faith in the reality of God, and the world of the Spirit?

All our heroes of faith from Servetus and Huss, and Francis David, and Murray, and Ballou, and Channing, and Parker—up to our present day, were all men inspired and controlled by a personal faith in God; were all enthused by a love to God and man.

Then, why step out of this tradition, this personal faith in God in which we are rooted, and in which we have a unity of spirit, and a depth of understanding, and a breadth of view, which, of course, takes in the whole world, and should be tolerant, and friendly to all expressions of religion—into a superficial liberalism, which is basically materialistic?

If this is our intention, let us frankly state where we stand, and make clear what our basic philosophy of life is. Let us make no bones about it.

Is this the faith of the humanists, that man is only an earth-bound creature; that the ultimate reality is material? Let him frankly tell us. Let some candid soul among them declare his real faith. Then we shall know better where we stand.

This is my query to the humanists of our fellowship.

The Tragic Elements In Life

William Lawrence Sullivan

There is a tragic element in life. No juvenility of optimism can obliterate it. No loud defiance can avert it. And the primary cause of it is that we are too great for our little standing-ground of space and our swift moment of time. We are grander than the world in which we live. We are haunted by a justice which we cannot see realized; we are visited by a beauty for which this earth is too poor to be a shrine; we are stricken with griefs for which our mortal resources have no healing. Our essential souls cannot find here either a reason or a fulfilment of their essential needs. If to this reason in the nature of things for our pain and darkness, we add all that may happen to us in the circumstances of life: illness, loss, solitude, and the ravages of death, we see as the years go on what we could not see in youth, how harsh are the "lacrimae rerum," the sense of tears in mortal things.

Now this tragic element we have not to run away from but to face, and if possible, conquer. The outer world we cannot change, or at best can change but little. The victory, if victory there is to be, must be from within. Let us lay that simple word to heart. Life's greatest achievement is from within. And if we have so miserable a religion or have passed through so wretched and falsifying an education as to have no knowledge of an interior life, we are bound to be the victims, not the victors of circumstance.

But if our inner eye is trained to see and the deep heart to feel what they were meant to see and feel, we shall discover that through the wilderness is a path of light, and in the dense darkness a Presence who bestows grace and strength for every need. Let us not attempt to prove this by elaborate dialectics. Try it; that is the proof invincible. Day by day let there be moments when you enter the fatherland of souls. Know that Supreme Spirit is near, that in mind and moral nature, and generous heart, He is constantly revealing to you His life and your destiny. With you he is overcoming; through you He is impressing upon the world the sign and seal of victorious soul. If because of our hurt we fall into cynicism without trust or a despair without hope and expectant love, we are holding back the whole redemptive process by which God is regenerating the world from matter to spirit, and we are contributing to the victory of darkness and soulless fate.

This we will not do. Rather we will be filial co-workers with the Lord of life for the illumination and elevation of human existence. We will take our part, though a costly one, in that redemptive work, which is so largely done by the bearing of a cross. Calvary is really a symbol of the whole course and meaning of things. It means that blackness and nothingness are not the end and goal. No; the midnight, the pain, the loss, that come to us are elements in the final divine redeeming victory, which shall see fulfilments, not donated, but hard won consummations achieved by such a life and death as Christ's. Lift your hope from under the stone of death. Build your peace from the fragments of disillusion. Release your loving heart from the dungeon of despair. A human being can do no diviner thing. It was Christ's work. Let it be ours. And in doing it we are not, we are never, alone. That Presence in whom is life is very near. That Christ in whom is power, stands by. From them comes the insight which is hope, the fortitude which is a crown, the faithful love which is the might of God, and the one foundation of peace to men.

Through all the shadows, Lord, let me see Thee still! When my strength is wasted grant me power to turn my stumbling steps to Thee; and when all doors are closed, open Thou the gate to Thy inexhaustible consolations. Without Thee there is ruin; with Thee restoration. Refresh, Lord, the stricken heart. Heal the wounded life. In the darkness hold up the lamp which has guided the great multitude of the noblehearted in all the ages out of waste and desert unto Thee, the home of our perfect peace. In the speaking of Thy name I will find my strength. In the doing of Thy will shall be my will. And for the rest I wait till Thy revealing hour shall come. AMEN.

"Without A Vision . . . !"

When the vote for consolidation had been announced, our President, Dr. Dana McLean Greeley asked, "What kind of a new denomination do we want? Writing in the summer issue of the *Unitarian Register,* he listed ten of the most desirable characteristics of our new denomination, which we summarize here:

1. We are a democratic association of churches and fellowships, in line with true congregational policy. . . . We would like to promote liberal religion more effectively through our international organization and otherwise around the globe. Last month our AUA board admitted a fellowship of American nationals from Saudi Arabia. I have heard of possible fellowships in Bangkok and Seoul.

2. We are dedicated to the principles of freedom of individual belief, applying to the religious life the theses of the American Bill of Rights.

3. Our evaluation of freedom not as an expediency of men granted by a ruler, or adopted by a popular vote—is derived from our appraisal of life . . . our beliefs in God and man himself.

4. We are sprung from Protestant Christianity, we honor our Judeo-Christian heritage: our fathers believed their mission to be to preach and practice the religion of Jesus of Nazareth. It is our aim to be as universal as he was universal . . . it is our task to close the gap between ourselves and Christendom, and also the gaps between Jewry and Islam and the religions of the East . . .

5. Our new denomination was not conceived to save souls or to convert the heathen, but it was conceived to seek and find the truth, to spread the good news and to elevate human life . . . "to build a better world" . . . to create the kingdom of God on earth.

6. Our association of churches and fellowships exist to serve the churches and fellowships and extend liberal religion wherever we can . . .

7. The General Assembly always must be responsible to the church and fellowships which are the association, and the board of trustees always must be responsible to the General Assembly which elects it.

8. Ours has been and will continue to be a "free faith" and no man will be taxed for his church any more than he will be regimented doctrinally . . .

9. We wish to have the best organization possible, but the organization is only a means to an end, which is the liberation and dedication of the human spirits and will . . . .

10. As we are a continental movement, inclusive of our island constituents, we are conjoining two denominations to constitute one association . . . and would achieve the largest measure of unity possible, a spiritual unity and a working and organic unity . . . . We need a dream of greatness, and of inclusiveness, and the will to make that dream come true.

From the Newsletter
of the All Souls Unitarian Church
of Greenfield, Massachusetts

Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there is in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all people. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the dull and ignorant; they too have their story.

Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.

Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, it is as perennial as the grass.

Take kindly to the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth.

Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.

by Max Ehrmann

from The Universalist Trumpet

BOOK REVIEWS

THE CRUEL GOD, JOB'S SEARCH FOR THE MEANING OF SUFFERING, by Margaret B. Crook. Boston: Beacon Press, 1959. Pp. xv, 222. $3.50

To be able to write a book about Job and say something new is no small accomplishment. That is just what Margaret Crook has achieved in *The Cruel God.* The theory that Miss Crook proposes is that the book of Job is the product of one of the schools of wisdom that flourished throughout the Near East in antiquity. The evidence she marshals points to the conclusion that the biblical book as we know it was composed in the fifth century by a Jewish teacher of wisdom for his own use in a school in Babylon.

Under Miss Crook's scholarly hand the book of Job becomes vibrantly alive as she traces the traditional arguments of Israel's sages who too easily set forth the ways of God with men. The author of Job shows that those answers were no longer adequate for the facts of human experience. The innocent do suffer and the wicked flourish in this world, while the ways of God remain shrouded in mystery. The fact of evil must be recognized but it must not be given the last word; the immensity of God is the backdrop against which all other facts of existence must be seen. "God wages no battle with powers of evil; He is omnipotent from the beginning." Yet God is essentially a good God and the divine goodness evokes the goodness in man. We are called to a modest partnership with God in fulfilling his purposes. To the extent that we discover in human relationships forgiveness, love, concern for others, we have discovered how to live "in true accord with the divine order."

Here is a book to send us back to the biblical Job and explore again the issues of life that were put forward twenty-five hundred years ago —issues and questions that are curiously modern today. They speak to us because they treat those things at the heart of existence which forever call forth the attention of thoughtful people concerned with the ultimate meaning of this enigma we call human experience.

Charles Conrad Forman

Greater works than these shall ye do." Christianity lays no rude hand on the sacred peculiarity of the individual genius and character. But there is no Christian sect which does not fetter a man. It would make all men think alike, or smother their conviction in silence. Were all men Quakers or Catholics, Unitarians or Baptists, there would be much less diversity of thought, character, and life, less of truth active in the world, than now. But Christianity gives us the largest liberty of the sons of God; and were all men Christians after the fashion of Jesus, this variety would be a thousand times greater than now: for Christianity is not a system of doctrines, but rather a method of attaining oneness with God. It demands, therefore, a good life of piety within, of purity without, and gives the promise that whoso does God's will shall know of God's doctrine.

from *The Transcient and Permanent in Christianity,* 1841.

"I think the good Lord planted in a man the desire to make beautiful things and set the example with the birds and flowers and trees. And I think, too, He planned it that it should not be too easy, for there is joy in striving. Ay, it may well be that all the joy is in the striving."

"I never see a piece of fine wood but that I dream of something beautiful it may become. And we are all like that when we dream of heaven. It may be that everything is like that; that the grub has some dreams about becoming a butterfly; that the very seeds in the earth dream of what they may become; an acorn dreaming of an oak with towering branches giving shelter to birds and squirrels; and 'neath the frozen snows a rose that knows it blows in June."

From JOHN ALONE

by Grif Alexander

THE UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN
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Report of the Nominating Committee

The Annual Meeting of the Unitarian Christian Fellowship will be held at the First Church in Boston on April 10 at 7 p.m. The following is the slate of officers proposed by the Nominating Committee:

For Honorary President: ..... Robert H. Loomis
For President: ..... Rev. Paul Harmon Chapman
For 1st Vice-President: .... Mrs. Herbert Lyman
For 2nd Vice-President: Rev. Harry H. Hoehler
Corresponding Secretary: Miss Frances Porter
Recording Secretary: ..... Miss Anna W. Cutler
Treasurer: ..... Constant Wendell
Director: .... Prof. James Luther Adams to 1964
Director: ..... Rev. Lawrence M. Jaffa to 1964
Director at Large: Rev. Carl R. Scovel to 1964
Editor in Chief: Rev. Charles C. Forman, Ph.D.
Contributing Editor: .... Rev. Charles Edwards Park, D. D.
Editorial Board: Rev. Carl Bihldorff, Rev. Victor H. Carpenter, Rev. Alan G. Deale, Rev. Amos B. Horlacher, Mrs. Herbert Lyman, Keith Faulkner Warren, Constant Wendell, Rev. Ronald M. Mazur.

Respectfully submitted,

Keith F. Warren, *Chairman*
Mrs. Herbert Lyman
Constant Wendell

UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
102 Mt. Vernon Street, Boston 8, Mass.

Enclosed is $3. Please enroll me as a member of the Fellowship and send me the *Unitarian Christian* for one year.

Name .....

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